

TELEVISION AND COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION AND THE EFFECT IT HAS ON
PREACHING

“EVERYTHING I NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT PREACHING I LEARNED FROM
WATCHING TV”

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my precious wife Christy and our children Abby, Jonathan, and Ethan. Thank you for sitting on the couch by my side as I “researched” countless hours of television programming.

ABSTRACT

Preachers find it increasingly difficult to maintain the attention of their audiences. Each sermon must compete with hours of high quality, professionally written, fast paced television that is regularly watched by church attendees. Try as they must, preachers struggle against such stiff competition. The only way to contend in the world of communication is to learn the concepts that make the television so powerful. A preacher has no choice but to learn the communication techniques that television and commercial producers use to get and keep the attention of the viewer and communicate the unchanging Word of God effectively.

This thesis-project is an attempt to give preachers an overview of the communication techniques used by television and commercial producers. To achieve this goal, the first chapter describes the problem. The second chapter is a Biblical and Theological defense for using modern communication techniques to deliver the ancient stories of scripture. The third chapter reveals some of the common techniques professionals use when making television shows and commercials, and the relevancy of using such information in sermons. The fourth chapter contains a lesson plan and handouts used to teach preachers the information contained in chapter three. The thesis ends with the presentation of conclusions drawn while teaching the lesson, as well as remarks of the students to whom it was taught.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM TELEVISION AND COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION CREATES FOR THE PREACHER

People have short attention spans. Albert Book says, in research concerning advertising, that “it is much tougher to gain and hold the audiences attention” (Book, Cary, and Tannenbaum 13). This insight is not only true for commercials and television but also for sermons. During sermons people only listen for a few moments before turning their attention to something else. George Temple, in a recent article for REV magazine, states that “my mother knew I could watch TV for hours, but I only lasted a few minutes in church before the squirming, fidgeting and pestering my little sister would begin” (Temple 70). He continued by describing what an incredible experience it was when the pastor showed a Billy Graham film. For the first time in his life, he was receiving information in church in the same way he received information elsewhere. People will stop paying attention to sermons when the preacher fails to communicate in a mode in which the listener is accustomed to receiving information. This problem is due in part to the television viewing habits of our culture. These habits cannot be changed nor can the way television programs and commercials are made. Therefore, preachers would be wise to learn from the media how to communicate in a way that listeners are accustomed to receiving information.

Justification of the Problem

Television and video images are replacing the positions that humans once filled. No longer are people able to march into their local warehouse stores to purchase their family's annual allotment of toilet paper and find several women happily handing out hotdog samples. Now as people enter a store they find a series of television sets advertising an array of products. Each television set has a built-in VCR or DVD player playing a video. At the point when the video or DVD is finished, it is set to loop the program back to the beginning. This tactic is used so that the television set can convey as much information to viewers as possible before something else catches their attention.

Do advertising agencies and television producers know communication techniques that pastors should learn? Is there a reason commercials are made to tell a story in thirty seconds or less? Why do people pay better attention to some television shows than others? What makes people change the channel on some commercials but are entertained by others?

People in our churches are not different from other Americans. They likely have the televisions in their homes on for the national average of seven hours and forty minutes a day as reported by Neilson Media Research. The same research shows the average American watches over four hours of television a day ("Facts"). By the age of sixty-five, the average American will have viewed over two million television commercials (Clark 195). Research shows that 50% of U.S. homes have three or more television sets (Rideout, Vandewater, and Wartella). Forty percent of

Americans say they "always or often watch television while eating dinner" (Gentile and Walsh 8). The people in churches are exposed to the same advertising techniques as everyone else. They watch the same thirty-minute situational comedies. They are being conditioned, without their knowledge, to receive information in a format dictated by the television producers and advertising executives that create the hours of television they watch. How can preachers compete with these professionally produced videos and commercials? How can preachers expect people to come and listen attentively to a thirty-minute sermon? How can preachers communicate to people the most important information they will ever need to hear if they fail to hold their attention by not adopting the communication techniques with which our culture has grown accustomed? Pastors must learn to address the unchanging, eternal truth of God's Word in ways that keep the attention of modern television viewers.

This project will consist of three main parts. The first part will show the theological mandate for communicating God's Word in a format that conforms to the listener's mindset. The second part of this project will systematically analyze the theories behind modern media communication. What are the theories and philosophies that drive advertising executives and television producers to create commercials and programs? The third part will take the information contained in this thesis to help pastors learn communication techniques that will enable them to gain and hold the attention of listeners during a sermon. Pastors must comprehend why listeners' attention spans are drastically shrinking. However, it is not enough merely to understand the problem; pastors must use their knowledge of modern communication techniques to change their presentation style. The information will be

collected, analyzed, and organized into a lesson plan that will be used to teach one session in a Doctor of Ministry course at United Theological Seminary. Such information will be helpful in teaching students to know their audience and to shape their communication style to meet and keep that audience's attention.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL MANDATE FOR COMMUNICATING GOD'S WORD IN A FORMAT THAT CONFORMS TO THE LISTENER'S MINDSET

Just as we need an interpreter to communicate to people in a different culture, preachers are the interpreters of God's message in their own culture. There are many barriers they face as they stand before the congregation on Sunday mornings that could hinder the communication of the message. The people who fill the pews each week are struggling with disappointing marriages, problem children, financial difficulties, and struggles at work. The greatest barrier preachers face in communicating however, is keeping the listeners' attention. Holding the listeners' attention requires among other things that preachers learn modern communication techniques. It is apparent from scripture that God has always chosen to speak to His people in a format with which they are familiar.

Jesus employed several methods to communicate clearly and keep the audience's attention. He used ideas and images familiar to those listening. Matthew chapter eight tells of an incident when Jesus and His disciples were getting into a boat to cross over the Sea of Galilee to "the country of the Gergesenes" (28). A multitude now surrounded Him, and thus He gave the command to depart to the other side of the lake. Not long after entering the boat, a large storm arose and began to batter the fishing boat in which Jesus and his disciples were riding. They feared that they all may lose their lives. Jesus then "rebuked" (Matt. 8.26) the wind and waves. The

word "rebuke" is used in this miracle to demonstrate His power over demonic forces. The term is used by Jesus only when casting out demons. The use of this word "may presuppose evil spirits as expressing themselves in the storm" (Hagner 33). This incident shows that Jesus had authority over nature and demons. The only one who has authority over such things is God; however, the disciples did not yet grasp this truth. They had been taught a complicated lesson in a powerful and relevant way. These were fishermen who understood the ways of the sea. God had their undivided attention when the storm began and they found their lives in peril. They were clearly focused on the event that was before them. Although they did not grasp the gravity of the lesson at that moment, some time later they would recall the events of that day and completely understand the message: Jesus is God. This lesson would be memorable for the disciples because Jesus communicated in a manner with which they were familiar.

Matthew 13 is another example of God communicating in a relevant form. This chapter is a discourse comprised mostly of parables. Jesus would use these short examples to communicate to the disciples the eternal truths He was teaching. These parables each compare the Kingdom of God to something relevant to the disciples' lives. Jesus used common experiences such as farming, fishing, and cooking in these short stories. Each disciple would be able to relate to one or more of the examples given by Jesus. When Jesus explained the parable of the sower (V1-9,18-23), the parable of the wheat and tares (V24-30), and the parable of the mustard seed (V31-32), He gave the disciples a clear picture of the Kingdom of God. Because they were never far from the realities of farming, the ideas of seed being sown on hard ground

or being snatched away by birds would resonate well with the disciples. This message carried much more meaning to that audience than it would a modern-day suburban audience. At least four of the 12 disciples were fishermen. John 21:2 infers that at least two others had fishing experience as well. Therefore when Jesus told the parable of the dragnet cast into the sea, these disciples would have easily understood what the illustration implied. Very few listeners in today's churches would be able to connect with the task of picking through the day's catch. However, the disciples needed little explanation to understand that a day was coming when those who believed would be separated from those who did not believe. This story is another example of God communicating with His people in a way that they easily understood.

In this section, I will present a variety of formats with which Biblical characters communicated in ways that were relevant to their audience. These men chose symbols and images, sermons, and letters to convey the truth.

Symbols and Images

Jesus often communicated using images. These were usually practical everyday items transformed into objects of communication. For example, He used a peck measure to show His teaching was not to be kept among an elite group but rather shared with the world (Mark 4:21-22). Kenneth Wuest says that "To put the lamp under a peck measure, would put out the flame, and it would give no light" (Weust 90). He chose to use a mustard seed to communicate that the Kingdom of God began small but would blossom into something much larger (Mark 4:30-32). The mustard seed, according to Barclay, "stood proverbially for the smallest possible thing"

(Barclay 109). However, the mustard seed was not the “smallest thing” that existed. Jesus, since He was the creator, could have described the electron, proton, and neutron that make up every piece of matter. Yet, by doing so, He would have confused his audience and failed to communicate the intended message. Therefore, He chose to use an object that related well with the audience at hand.

Jesus also used imagery in Matthew 18:6 concerning the type of faith one must have to come to Him. By using the image of a millstone he explained the consequences of leading small children astray. The outcome of drowning in the sea due to the millstone being hung around their neck was a vivid image for the disciples. Each of them would have “undoubtedly had heard of the punishment inflicted by the Romans in Galilee on some of the leaders of the insurrection under the early Zealot leader, Judas the Galilean” (Lane 346). The words of Christ proved very powerful with such vivid imagery.

Jesus used other images to communicate such as salt that had lost its flavor (Mark 9:49-50), a camel that could not fit through the eye of a needle (Mark 10:25), and figs on fig trees (Mark 11:12-14, 20-24). When He celebrated the Passover feast He used the symbols of bread and wine to help the disciples remember His death.

Yet, the most powerful image that Jesus used to communicate was the cross. There was no question concerning Jesus’ lesson when He commanded the disciples to “take up their cross daily and follow Him” (Luke 9:23). They knew well the implications associated with cross bearing. Only those that had been given the death sentence would be marching up to Golgotha. There was no turning back, second chances, or a way out. Those that bore the cross were completely committed to death.

Jesus used the cross to show the disciples that He required a lifetime commitment. They would be required to leave their old life behind and even die as Jesus did.

Jesus used images familiar to His listeners. He taught so they would be able to understand the information. He knew His audience well and, while keeping the eternal message intact, communicated in a format that they would understand.

These images were readily received by the people of Jesus' day because the prophets of the Old Testament used familiar objects to communicate God's message to the people as well. Moses used the plagues to communicate to Pharaoh that he was powerless. John Sailhamer says "What we see in the plagues, then, is an unmasking of Pharaoh's claims to deity and his claim to rule the universe. Pharaoh was in effect, taking credit for something in which he had no part, and the signs that Moses performed demonstrated that unmasking to both the Egyptians and the Israelites" (253). The Israelites and Egyptians both would have understood that nothing was able to subdue Jehovah their God.

When God wanted Jeremiah to communicate an upcoming disaster to the nation He used a potter. He told Jeremiah that just as the potter reworked the clay when it had a flaw, He would also do to the people of God. John Bright, in his commentary on Jeremiah, notes that "as the quality of the clay determines what the potter can do with it, so the quality of a people determines what God will do with them" (125). This visual illustration would communicate accurately as Jeremiah retold God's message to the people. Unfortunately, clarity in this case was not tantamount to obedience.

Hosea lives the object lesson when God tells him to marry Gomer, a prostitute. This unfaithful relationship of Gomer expresses to the nation how they have been unfaithful to God in their practices of idolatry. “For the purpose of depicting before the eyes of the sinful people the judgment to which Israel has exposed itself through its apostasy from the Lord, Hosea is to marry a prostitute” (Keil, 36). Hosea’s message of forgiveness would carry a sense of passion when he proclaimed to the people that God would take them back.

A powerful object lesson occurs in First Kings with a long awaited dual between Jehovah God and the false god of Baal. Elijah has spoken to King Ahab and proclaimed the message from God that there will be no rain in the land until he says differently. House notes that Baal was supposedly the god of rain and fire (211). Therefore, the absence of such natural occurrences would bring into question the supposed power of Baal.

What would the people think if there was no rain for three years? The circumstances that come with a drought would naturally get and keep the attention of the nation. Drought brings death through dehydration and starvation; these are events that beg to be noticed. The nation knew who was causing the drought; in 1 Kings 18:10, Ahab's servant Obadiah tells Elijah that the king has searched all the surrounding countries for him to no avail. It was Elijah who proclaimed God's message in 1 Kings 17:1. The nation, therefore, was well aware that the true God was behind the drought. The drought was also the beginning of God communicating to the people that Baal was powerless and God was all powerful. This message would come to a finale on Mount Carmel.

After three years of drought, Elijah finally makes himself known to King Ahab and challenges him upon Mount Carmel. The question will finally be answered as to who the real God is in Israel. Elijah allows the 450 prophets of Baal to proceed first. After hours of worthless chants, dances and shouting, nothing occurs. Elijah then sets up the altar to the true God, and after one request, fire rains down from heaven and consumes Elijah's sacrifice and the altar he sacrificed it on.

Many of those standing on Mount Carmel did not really know what to believe and had been undecided for years, vacillating between two opinions. They had watched for hours as nothing happened at the altar of Baal. But in astonishment, they see the fire fall on the true God's altar after only one request by Elijah. What did these people learn? Knowing that Baal was supposedly the god of fire, their belief in Baal would have been greatly minimized. But after the slaying of Baal's prophets, Elijah then asks God to send rain. For the first time in three years, they would have rain, no more drought, starvation, or dehydration. Elijah's God really did have power over rain and fire. God chose to communicate to the people of Israel in a way that would communicate His message thoroughly. He used common objects like water and fire to proclaim a powerful message. For three years, the land went without water. Everyday the people would wake up and be reminded that the god of Baal was powerless to bring rain. Yet when Jehovah God was asked, rain was sent bountifully. Elijah used rain and fire to communicate to the people that Jehovah was God. These were objects that were familiar, and necessary, to their everyday life.

King David also used symbols and images when writing Psalms. Psalm 23 contains some powerful imagery concerning shepherding. 1 Samuel 16:11 tells us

that David was a shepherd. He was accustomed to the needs of sheep and the requirements of a shepherd. The people of Israel had, for many generations, raised livestock. Joseph, in Genesis 46:34, explains to the King of Egypt that his family require a lot of land when coming to Egypt in order to raise their cattle. And Luke 2:8 suggests that the area around Bethlehem was at least suitable to shepherding. Therefore, when David writes that the “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want” the reader immediately begins to draw an image to mind of the provision of God. Their experiences in the field with sheep would give them a basis from which to understand David’s next comments.

“He makes me lie down in green pastures.”

The imagery might be lost on a modern reader, but a shepherd in Palestine would understand it clearly. He would know the difficulty involved in making a sheep lie down. Philip Keller, in his book “A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23,” says: Because of their very makeup, it is almost impossible for sheep to be made to lie down unless four requirements are met:

1. They must be free of all fear.
2. They must be free from friction among themselves.
3. They must be free from the torment of pests – the maddening irritation of flies, insects, and what-have-you.
4. They must be free from hunger; sheep won’t lie down while they feel in the need of finding food.” (35)

The shepherd would understand that God, the good Shepherd, would meet all of these needs for His people.

“He leads me beside still waters.”

The shepherd reading this Psalm would know that sheep do not drink from fast moving water. Paul Harrison, in his research on Psalm 23 says, Sheep won’t drink from turgid, rushing streams for two reasons. First, because their nostrils are too close to their mouths and they don’t like water up their nose any more than you do; and second, because if they lose their balance trying to drink in rushing waters, the sheer weight of saturated wool will render them helpless – and they have the same instinctive fear of drowning that you do. (6)

Without much explanation the imagery used by David communicates clearly to the audience. He shows the reader that God provides for his every need.

“Yeah, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.”

Stephen Haboush, a shepherd for many years in the Palestine area, addresses this subject in his book “My Shepherd Life in Galilee”. He talks of dark valleys some 500 feet below sea level. Places where wild animals would hide to ambush his sheep. Places where criminals would hide to ambush him. The darkness of these valleys would bring fear to the sheep and require him to continually reassure them by calling. The shepherding people reading this Psalm would not only understand the message being conveyed, but also would be reminded of the dark long valleys. They would

feel again the loneliness and the fear of walking their flock through these areas. They would sense the calm assurance, as we do, that God is by their side during the dark valleys of life.

“Your rod and staff they comfort me”

The rod and the staff had many uses in a shepherd’s life. The most common uses of these tools were defensive and corrective. Concerning these tools, “Expositors Commentary” says, “A shepherd carried a rod to club down wild animals and a staff to keep the sheep in control”. Paul Harrison describes the tools:

The handle of the cudgel was shaped to the shepherd’s hand, and he could both strike with it as a weapon, and throw it with great skill . . .

The staff, a long stick with a hooked end, was used to pull back by its hind leg a sheep that was running off, or guide it by pressure on its side right or left into the right path, or to a newborn lamb and put it down beside its mother, or to free a sheep from entanglement in a bramble bush (7).

Modern readers may have to research the meanings behind each of the images David used when writing this Psalm, but the original readers did not. They knew what David was communicating. Without any explanation the readers of the 23 Psalm would understand God’s provision, care, and love for His people solely through the image and description of a shepherd.

Sermons

The New Testament preachers were skilled at communicating audience-centered messages. Compare Peter's message at Pentecost (Acts 2) with Paul's message on Mars Hill (Acts 17). Although each preacher faced a different audience, each communicated the gospel in ways uniquely suited for their respective occasion.

Peter

On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to several thousand Jews and Jewish converts. Each one had come to Jerusalem to worship and celebrate this holy day. Some people had come from other countries and spoke languages not native to Jerusalem. One of the miracles of this day was the communication of the gospel in other languages (Acts 2:6,11). God used the native languages of the listeners to communicate His message that day. By the time Peter stood to speak, the crowd was eager to hear an explanation of these and other supernatural events.

Since the audience consisted of Jews and Jewish converts, Peter began making his case based on Semitic ideas. The New American Commentary points out that Peter used Jewish idioms that were relevant to the crowd. For example, the term "men of Israel" (V22), "all of you who live in Jerusalem" (V14), and "give ear to my words" (14) typifies Semitic style (Polhill 108). Also, no one but Jews would have cared where Jesus was from when Peter proclaimed He was "Jesus of Nazareth" in verse 22 (Polhill 111).

Peter began verse 17 quoting the prophet Joel and other prophets. In verses 25-28 he quotes Psalm 16 by King David. "The psalm depicts David's vision that the

Messiah would not be bound by death. Since Christ alone has burst the bonds of death by virtue of his resurrection, then he alone is the Messiah whom David foresaw” (Polhill 114). If this had not been a Jewish audience, these quotations would have been meaningless. Gentiles did not know, nor care about scripture. Peter took the opportunity to communicate to a Jewish audience a Jewish presentation of the gospel. The response to this audience-centered message was overwhelming with 3,000 souls being added to God’s kingdom.

Paul

Paul, however, faced a very different scenario. He began to speak to philosophers in the Areopagus which is located in Athens, Greece. Athens was home to the famous Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. It would have been useless for Paul to begin a gospel presentation to this audience by quoting from the book of Joel. Unlike the audience with whom Peter spoke, this audience saw no authority in Jewish scripture. Paul began with what they believed about gods. He noticed this city had an idol to an unknown god; he began by saying he personally knew this God. The New American Commentary states “There is a strong emphasis on ignorance, or not knowing. For Greeks, as for Stoics, ignorance was a cardinal sin. The greatest virtue was to discover truth through pursuing the divine reason within oneself. Not to live in accordance with reason, to live in ignorance, was the greatest folly imaginable” (Polhill 372). Since Paul knew his audience he was able to gain their attention very quickly with this statement.

While Peter quoted from David during his message, Paul quoted a more familiar source to his audience. In Acts 8:28 he quotes from the poet Aratus of Soli saying "...for we are also his offspring." (Phillips 352). This quote (V28) would have bridged the cultural gap between Paul and his audience. It also reveals that Paul thought it important to communicate a message that was centered upon the experiences and knowledge of the listener. At the same time, however, he was able to present a gospel presentation.

These sermons show the importance of a speaker recognizing his audience and communicating in a way familiar to them. It would have been useless for Peter to quote from Aratus of Soli while preaching at Pentecost. Likewise Paul would have been much less effective if he had asked the Stoics and Epicureans to join him in the reading of scripture. Yet, each preacher was able to communicate the gospel in a way that was relevant to his audience by using authorities with which they were familiar.

Letters

The Bible has shown that Jesus, Peter, and Paul each knew how to adapt the unchanging message of God's grace to an ever-changing audience. The disciple John used the same techniques when writing to the seven churches mentioned in the first three chapters of his Revelation. John mentions each church by name and then sites details of the scenarios occurring in each location. The message he delivers is aimed at a specific need for each church.

John begins his address to the churches by speaking to the Church of Ephesus in chapter 2. He specifically mentions his awareness of the activity of the Nicolaitans

and recognizes they each share a common hatred for this group (V6). According to Ramsay, the “Nicolaitans *were* Christians who still showed devotion to the emperor by burning incense to his statue or image” (Ramsay. 300-301). This statement was not a general proclamation made to all the churches, but rather specifically to the church at Ephesus. John used this common dislike for the Nicolaitans as, among other things, a communication tool in his letter.

John then addresses the poverty that the church of Smyrna is experiencing (V9). “Smyrna was a wealthy city where learning, especially in the sciences and medicine, flourished” (Johnson). The Christians in Smyrna would have been living in poverty surrounded by a city of abundance. John speaks to this scenario specifically when he reminds them in verse 9 that in Christ they are rich. He addresses the specific need in the readers lives and reminds them of God’s provision and love.

He states that the church of Pergamum is dwelling in the middle of Satan’s throne (V13). “This certainly refers to the fact that Pergamum was a center for worship of the pagan gods, especially the emperor cult. The first temple in the empire was established in honor of Augustus in A.D. 29 at Pergamum because it was the administrative capital of Asia” (Johnson). While modern readers of this letter may not connect with this reference, the readers in Pergamum most assuredly did. It was an image familiar to them.

To the church of Thyatira, John becomes so specific he mentions a woman in the church and describes her activities as that of Jezebel (V20). This statement is an obvious reference to the immoral and sinful wife of the Old Testament King Ahab. He states that those who commit adultery with her will suffer great tribulation. And

to the church of Sardis and Philadelphia he says he knows their works. Nothing is specifically mentioned concerning what those works were. However, when the writer states the church in Sardis is “dead” from said activity, we can be assured that they knew what was being mentioned. John leaves nothing vague to those originally reading this letter. He uses every opportunity to address their specific spiritual needs.

The final word to the churches is addressed to Laodicea. He tells them that they are neither hot nor cold (3:15). Expositors Commentary explains that two sources of water ran into the city. One water source, a hot spring, came from Hieropolus seven miles away. By the time the water reached the city of Laodicea it would no longer be hot but lukewarm. The other source of water, a cold mountain spring, came from Colosse less than ten miles away. By the time the water reached the city it would be lukewarm as well. None of the other churches would have understood the symbolism quite as well as the Church at Laodicea. The meaning of the statement would have resonated clearly to these readers. John mentions the water issue that was a common problem to the people of Laodicea. He then uses this issue to address their spiritual apathy. Only the people of the Church of Laodicea would have been profoundly affected by the allegory of the water.

The churches of the Revelation were each very different in geographic location, disobedience, and spiritual direction. John could have very easily written a general letter for each to repent of sin and right themselves to God. However, he chose to know his audience and write letters that addressed specific problems to their churches. He chose to center the writing on the audience and their needs.

Conclusion

God has always sought to communicate with people in ways that catch and keep their attention. He has chosen to communicate in ways that are most relevant to His audience. He has used parables, images, symbols, sermons, and letters all to proclaim His message. Each was expressed with the specificity of the receiver in mind. It would be absurd for preachers to ignore the precedent set by the ultimate Communicator. Therefore, preachers have a theological mandate to follow God's example and communicate in ways that are relevant to their audience.

CHAPTER THREE

PRECEDENT RESEARCH

Every time a change occurs in communication technology preachers must adapt. When Gutenberg invented the printing press preaching was changed forever. No longer were people's theological educations limited to the stories told on the walls of the cathedrals. No longer were the preacher's sermons unchallenged. People now could purchase a copy of the Bible for themselves. In Victor Hugo's book "Notre-Dame de Paris" a scholar standing before the cathedral, looks at the first printed book he has ever seen and says "This will kill that" (Mann 264). His point is that the printed word will bring an end to the people's dependence upon the church. That is, if preachers do not adapt.

Martin Luther started the reformation fires with his ideas. But his words fanned the flames because they were printed in books and pamphlets by the thousands. "At least two of Luther's sermons ran through twenty editions in two or three years. According to one estimate, a third of all books printed in Germany between 1518 and 1525 were by him" (Mann 275-276). Since scripture was readily available the general populace developed a theology vastly different from the Catholic Church. The widespread teachings of Luther, thanks to the printing press, only encouraged a snowball of further protests. The church began to condemn Luther as a heretic and ordered the burning of his books. By order of Pope Leo X, Johan Eck toured Germany proclaiming Luther's teaching as heresy. However, "everywhere it

caused riots” (277). The newly informed public would not put up with the church’s unsound teachings and disapproval of Luther.

The protestant reformation was successful, in part, due to a preacher’s use of a new technological tool in communication: the printing press. Luther was effective because he “addressed the German nation in its own language” (282). No other preacher or theologian had communicated so effectively in the language of the day. Due to the availability of information offered by the printing press, the message of the Catholic Church was challenged. No longer did the Church hold a monopoly on information including, but not limited to, that of scripture. Preachers would have to learn to compete with this new mode of communication. The congregation was now able to read.

Another major advance in communication technology was with the invention of the radio. The public would now have access to entertainment, news, and music daily. The popularity of this new found medium was overwhelming. The first issue of Radio Broadcast, May, 1922, says:

The rate of increase in the number of people who spend at least a part of their evening in listening in is almost incomprehensible. To those who have recently tried to purchase receiving equipment, some idea of this increase has undoubtedly occurred, as they stood perhaps in the fourth or fifth row at the radio counter waiting their turn only to be told when they finally reached the counter that they might place an order and it would be filled when possible (Archer 241).

This new mode of communication brought forth a change tantamount only to that of the printing press. Preachers would have to decide if they would embrace this new mode of communication. The popularity of the radio was teaching people to receive information in a new style or format. Congregations accustomed to stale dry messages now expected something comparable to that of the radio show they listened to the previous evening. Adam Powell argues that “radio and literature are unique in engaging the imagination, permitting us to create our own image in the mind’s eye” (Mitchell 55). People were able to “see” the story and characters unfold before their imaginative eye. No longer were small communities isolated from the rest of the world. With a flip of the switch they had news and entertainment from around the country and world. “The instinctive craving of mankind for amusement, for something to brighten the humdrum of life, was now to be had for the mere cost of a radio set” (Archer 251). Preachers had to learn to compete. They were up against professional entertainers and news from around the globe. With the flip of a switch a listener could tune into a wide variety of music. With the turn of a knob his congregants could even hear other preachers.

Preachers face another technological communication advancement: television. They must compete with television shows that move quickly; commercials that entertain; and movies that hold their attention for up to two hours. In order for preachers to better communicate, we must learn how congregants are accustomed to receiving information. We must learn to communicate information in similar way to television. The average American watches television around four hours a day (“Facts”). By the age of sixty-five a person will have viewed over two million

television commercials (Clark 195); the medium of television is obviously how people are accustomed to receiving information. What can preachers learn from the way television programs and commercials are written in order to better communicate God's Word?

Several tools are used in writing television shows and commercials to keep the viewer's attention. In "Broadcast Advertising" Sherilyn Zeigler and Herbert Howard list the simplicity of using these tools in an acrostic entitled "**HOW-E-ZEE.**"

Hit home with your audience

Offer a reward or a promise

Win Loyalty with brand images

Earn Trust through proof claims

Zoom in on personal value

End with a clincher

Eugene Vale in his book "Technique of Screenplay Writing" explains the required tools in each chapter by using titles such as "The Film and Language," "Transition of Action," and "Understandability, Probability, Identification." The work I found that most clearly explained effective commercials, however, was entitled "The Radio and Television Commercial" by Albert Book, Norman Cary, and Stanley Tannenbaum. The authors list several essentials of an effective commercial to sell a product. The outline of this paper follows many of the headings found in this book when describing the characteristics of an effective commercial: (1) do your research first, (2) emphasize your main selling point, (3) make the commercial relevant, (4) get attention fast—and keep it, (5) keep your commercial simple—stay on track—don't

waste words, (6) write clearly and conversationally, (7) repeat yourself, and (8) be honest. These points may show preachers the importance of learning the same techniques to make sermons more effective.

“Do your research first”

All commercials and television shows begin with some form of research. They need to determine the characteristics of the product they are selling. They need to analyze who they are targeting to buy their product. Albert Book, et al. says “Get the facts – all the facts you can – about the product or service you are to advertise. Make sure you know . . . whom you are trying to reach” (109). Knowing details about what is being advertised helps the consumer make a sound or informed decision concerning your product.

The same truth applies to preaching; in order for the listener to make a sound or informed decision about the sermon, he must know all the scriptural facts. Robert L. Thomas, in his article “Exegesis and Expository Preaching,” said, “He (the preacher) must have a thorough understanding of the passage to be preached before devising the mechanics for conveying his understanding to the congregation” (Thomas 138). It is also important to know what audience is being reached. Having the audience in mind will aid in making specific claims that will connect. In order to accomplish this goal in preaching the preacher must think about who will be listening to the message. Haddon Robinson says “when he is working on the application side of his sermon he mentally invites representatives of various contexts in his church to sit across the desk and interact with the text” (Willhite and Gibson 135).

There is, however, a warning concerning too much research. Screenwriters for television shows and movies say that there are “facts of which they (the viewer) must be made aware,” These facts “are handled by the device called exposition” (Howard 60). Exposition gives clarity to events that “have happened in the past, feelings desires, shortcomings, or aspirations of the character . . . they may be specific circumstances and ‘world of the story’ that help create the story’s premise” (Howard 60). However, it is possible to add too much information. Howard adds to this discussion that “overuse of exposition quickly becomes tedious for the audience” (60). Max Adams agrees with the problem of too much exposition in his book “A Screenwriters Survival Guide.” In a chapter discussing the “dos and don’ts” of writing a television show, he says one of the problems he encounters regularly is “Too much exposition when characters explain everything, who people are, what the events are leading up to the story, [and] all the details that maybe the characters should be doing.” (199-200). This type of information makes a commercial or television show too long and detailed to follow and, thus, loses the viewer’s attention.

Just as a television show can be too much information, a sermon can have too much information. John Koessler says in an article entitled “Getting Gold from the Text,” “My role as a preacher is not to function primarily as an exegetical commentary or a Bible handbook, but to take biblical truth and apply it to the audience. If you haven’t applied the text you haven’t preached” (Koessler 225). A sermon must be more than a lesson in exegesis. A listener can easily be lost in laborious details that only preachers may find interesting. The preacher must be careful not to share all his research.

“Emphasize your main selling point”

The advertising executives and television producers all agree that the most important ingredient to a good commercial or show is the idea. Without a clear idea the viewer will not follow the show. Without a clear idea the buyer will not know why to purchase a product. Book says that “A good commercial is specific. It should make one definite point and support it with concrete evidence” (18). The consequences of failing in this objective prove devastating. Too many ideas that are vague and incomplete produce the opposite effect intended. Book continues, “You must be careful never to overload a commercial with too many selling facts or too large a variety of styles or techniques. If a commercial tries to use too many ideas, words, and pictures it will emerge haphazard and ineffective” (Book 23). The idea is so important that “campaigns succeed or fail on the strength or weakness of the idea” (17).

The same could be said for sermons. Haddon Robinson says that “effective communication demands a single theme” (33). Robinson continues by stating that “to ignore the principle that a central, unifying idea must be at the heart of an effective sermon is to push aside what students of preaching have to tell us” such as “Andrew W. Blackwood, John A. Broadus, James W. Cox, Faris D. Whitesell, Lloyd M. Perry, and John Wood” (35)

Why is the idea of a commercial or sermon so important? Why not have several ideas? Huntley Baldwin answers that question succinctly by stating the purpose and importance of a clear idea is to “Boil down into one short, simple

sentence the primary reason you are asking the consumer to buy your brand instead of another” (21). If the prospective customer walks away not understanding the product’s one benefit, he is likely not to purchase it. Commercials with too many ideas are difficult to follow. Our minds naturally gravitate toward those shows that have a sense of unity. Any commercial, television show, or movie that has too many ideas will produce confusion in the viewer. This confusion ultimately ruins a commercial, television show, or movie. Howard and Mabley in their book “The Tools of Screenwriting” say concerning this issue “There can be only one main objective if the film is to have unity. A story with a protagonist who has more than one ultimate aim must invariably dramatize the success or failure of one effort before going on to the other”(45).

The same problem exists for sermons. Wayne McDill, in his book “The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching,” says that “if you cannot state your sermon idea or division statement in a clear sentence, you are still not sure what you are saying” (208). When the preacher is unsure of what he is saying, the congregation will likely follow suit. Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, in their book “Power in the Pulpit,” expound on the necessity of a good idea by saying “identifying your central idea of the text will also enable you to give direction to those who eventually hear your message. They will be able to understand more easily what you are saying, because you give them a point of reference of the details of your sermon” (133).

A good idea accomplishes more than merely keeping the attention of the viewer. A good idea helps the viewer remember the product. Book says that a “Gallup and Robinson . . . investigation into commercial effectiveness indicates that

viewer and listener recall is lessened when multiple ideas are crammed into a TV or radio message” (23). The less the commercial tries to communicate, the more the buyer is likely to remember. Huntley Baldwin agrees by asking the rhetorical question “If you could get your prospect to remember only one thing about your brand, what would it be? (21) Preachers would do well to ask the same question about their sermons. Don Sunukjian says the central truth, or idea, of a sermon “represents the dominant thrust of the message, it is the thing you want the listener to remember even if he forgets everything else” (20).

An idea must be clear and memorable. A good idea must also lead to a natural conclusion. If there are several ideas in a television show that never come to a conclusion the viewer will have difficulty following the story line. He is also less likely to watch the program again. What commercials call “ideas,” Eugene Vale says television shows call the “goal:” “The goal is a result in the future” (129). At the beginning of the show the main character has a goal to accomplish. There are small progressions of the story that lead to the fulfillment of the character’s goal. The story must bring the viewer to the climax having left nothing undone. No questions must be left unanswered at the end of the show. The goal must also not conclude in the middle of the show leaving the viewer no reason to continue watching. Vale says:

The climax of this development comes when no further graduation is possible. This means that graduation should be distributed over such a space that its highest point coincides with the end of the picture. If this moment is reached earlier, the remainder of the picture becomes stagnant. If the picture ends at a

time when we are still able to anticipate a further graduation of its elements, the end comes unexpectedly and unsatisfactorily. (200)

The same problem can occur in a sermon when one point of the message is stronger than the main idea. For example, the sermon can come to a climax at point two. The listener is satisfied with what has been communicated and prepared to respond. However, if the preacher has one more point to make he will lose the effectiveness of climax and quite possibly the listener as well. Since listeners are accustomed to receiving information via television, they are used to the story climaxing at the end. Preachers must fulfill at the end of the sermon what they promised at the beginning.

“Make the commercial relevant”

No product will sell if it is useless. Someone must see that the “Ginsu” steak knives can cut through a tin can before they purchase a set. They must also have the desire to own a knife with that attribute. In other words, the product must be relevant. Book claims that a good commercial must “strike a chord with its viewers or listeners and takes on a life of its own as it hits the airwaves or the TV screen” (18). The viewer must be able to see himself using the product in similar circumstances in his own life. Concerning relevancy, Baldwin said “the product should be shown in situations in which it normally would be used. Researchers call this providing the viewer with ‘product experience cues.’ A ‘product experience cue’ is a sight or sound stimulus exactly like those experienced by the consumer when he or she buys,

serves, eats, rides in, or otherwise experiences the product himself or herself” (16).

When the advertiser or screenwriter can create within the viewer a sense of empathy with a character or usability with a product then a connection has been made. People are always more receptive to products and shows to which they can relate. Baldwin says that “we have seen that people seem to be more receptive to those messages that are ‘familiar’ to them, that is, compatible with the attitudes and beliefs they already hold” (24).

A relevant sermon will also bring to mind what is familiar to the listener. Don Sunukjain says that “relevancy occurs when the listener senses, ‘This message has some bearing on my life. I can see how it applies to a specific situation’” (35).

Why is television so adept at creating this feeling of familiarity and relevancy? Television uniquely raises and then fills needs in people’s lives. Determining what is in their heart and then developing a commercial idea or a television show around that concept takes work. When developing an advertising campaign, for example, an agency will work hard gathering the necessary information. Czerniawski and Maloney say that to develop a need which leads to relevancy and familiarity “you have to stay current with the shifting and emerging needs by using an assortment of methods: a) talking to customers on a regular basis, b) using intuition based on past experiences, c) borrowing from other categories for parallels and insights, and d) using occasional quantitative studies that allow for trend tracking” (27). One of the commercial campaigns that is the effective at developing need by being relevant is the “Got Milk” ads. In his book “Truth, Lies, and Advertising,” Jon Steel describes the thought process that helped develop the “Got

Milk” slogan. They concluded that it was easier to persuade people who are already doing something to do it more often than it is to persuade people to do something that they have never done before. He says “If we were right to talk to the user group then the immediate question we had to answer was ‘how did they use milk’” (Steel 262). He continues explaining that they came to the conclusion that milk was never used in a sentence by itself. He says “we had this notion we called ‘_____ and milk’. If you think about it, you hardly ever use milk on its own. The ‘_____’ part is brownies, cereal, coffee . . . those things taste so good with milk, and you can’t imagine eating them without it” (Steel 263). Thus the commercial campaign was born where people filled their mouths with cookies and went to the refrigerator and found the milk carton was empty. The advertising executives determined how everyone used milk. After making that determination they simply raised the need by removing the common denominator from very relevant circumstances. Henceforth, “Got Milk” was born.

A sermon, similarly, must reach into people’s hearts and give them a reason to pay attention. Sunukjian says that preachers must “give the listeners a reason for wanting to hear the message. Since the Bible is God speaking to them, what is in their life or world that God wishes to speak about through this message?” (65).

“Get attention fast - and keep it”

A commercial or a television show is only effective if it can get the attention of the viewer. Without viewers attention, the commercial will sell no products and the viewer will change the channel without watching the program. Changing the channel has become easier than ever with the invention of the remote control. No

longer is it necessary to get up from the couch to change the channel. This device makes getting and holding the attention of a viewer more difficult. A study done by “Channels” magazine to determine why adults change channels so frequently concluded that “29.4% get bored with the program they’re watching and 28.4% want to make sure they’re not missing a better program” (Walker, Bellamy, Traudt 104). Albert Book comments on the use of remote controls and says “remote controls allow television viewers to ‘channel surf’ during commercials or to mute the sound during commercial breaks.” He continues “it is much tougher to gain and hold the audience’s attention” (Book 13). Gaining and holding the audiences attention will grow increasingly difficult with the increasing use of DVR’s and “TiVO”. These devices allow the viewer to edit the commercials completely from the program they have recorded.

So what are an advertising executive and a screenwriter to do? The commercial and program must get and hold the viewer’s attention. Baldwin says that “a good commercial must both stop the viewer and hold his or her attention. Too often the critical part – holding attention – is overlooked in favor of initial shock tactics” (15). Holding the attention of the viewer is critical in commercials and television. For when interest is low so is the recall of the information presented. Lloyd and Clancy in their book “Uncover the Hidden Power of Television Programming” says that there are five “factors most consistently related to higher commercial recall scores: Involved, Entertained, Moved, Interested, and Captured attention” (56). Two of the five in this list involve getting and holding the attention or interest of the viewer.

Television has the ability to keep our attention unlike anything else. People have difficulty taking their eyes off the visions flickering on the screen. There is evidence to support the idea that we are naturally inclined to give our attention toward light and movement. Nikos Metallinos in his book “Television Aesthetics” says that “the television picture is depicted as an optic array of light that contains transformation structures of events. It is interesting to take note that the television picture is made of light, and light itself contains information about the things depicted” (87). He explains the power of moving light to hold our attention by saying “light is essential to life. It is the key ingredient of visual perception and orientation in space and time. The receptors of the eyes are sensitive to only that tiny portion of the vast spectrum of electromagnetic radiation known as light” (Metallinos 20). A 1986 study at the University of Missouri sought to determine “if the formal features of television – cuts, zooms, pans, sudden noises – activate the attention on the screen. By watching how brain waves were affected by formal features, the researchers concluded that these stylistic tricks can indeed trigger involuntary responses and derive their attentional value through the evolutionary significance of detecting movement . . . it is the form, not the content, of television that is unique” (Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi 1). Therefore, people may be naturally attracted to the lights and movement on television; however, they still change the channel. How does a television producer or commercial executive keep a viewer from changing the channel? How can they hold his attention?

The most powerful way to hold the attention of the viewer is to tell a good story. Graeme Turner in his book “Film and Social Practice” says that “some

societies may have no equivalent to the novel, but all societies tell stories” (67). He continues discussing the importance of stories by saying “the fact that narrative is universal should alert us to at least two possibilities. The first that narrative might be a property of the human mind, like language; the second is that narrative might serve an essential social function which makes it indispensable to human communities” (Turner 71-72). What is it about the story that is so powerful? David Howard and Edward Mabley say that the key “to keeping an audience in their seats, paying attention to the story and caring about the outcome and characters . . . is achieved through uncertainty” (37). A good story develops a certain amount of uncertainty. Questions arise during the program concerning the main characters ability to fulfill his goal. This gives way to a certain amount of uncertainty and keeps the viewer’s attention.

However, there is more to developing a good story than merely fostering a feeling of uncertainty. David Howard says that “a good story well told is simple, but it’s not easy” (23). He lists five factors that a good story must have:

- 1) The story is about somebody with whom we have some empathy.
- 2) This somebody wants something very badly.
- 3) This something is difficult, but possible to do, get, or achieve.
- 4) The story is told for maximum emotional impact and audience participation in the proceedings.
- 5) The story must come to a satisfactory ending, which does not necessarily mean a happy ending (Howard and Mabley 23).

It is the uncertainty of the ending and the future that keeps the viewer tuned in. The viewer desires to see how the story will end; therefore, he watches the entire program. “Consequently, the ‘future’ of the motion picture story remains as the fundamentally important time” (Vale 123).

A good story might have the future event ending differently than the viewer expected. This powerful part of the story is known as the surprise. “We anticipate a certain happening. Another event takes place instead. That is: surprise” (Vale 174). Vale continues “surprise is one of the most important effects of any story, whether it is used for comedy or drama or tragedy. Surprise can only be achieved by anticipation” (Vale 174). When a viewer becomes involved in a good story he will want to see how it ends. This use of a story will get and hold the attention of the viewer.

A good sermon will also keep the listeners attention from beginning to end. During the introduction the preacher must give the listener a reason to stay attentive through the entire sermon; the preacher must “engage the audience” (Sunukjian) by “Develop[ing] a need or curiosity through humor, references to personal or contemporary matters” (Sunukjian 65). Yet, getting the attention and keeping the attention of the listener are two different objectives. Preachers usually plan on inserting illustrations to regain the attention of the listener and to clarify the main point. “Illustration serves to clarify the textual truth in the mind of the hearer with images which appeal to his imagination” (McDill 185). As with commercials and television shows, stories in sermons are effective at holding the attention of the listener.

“Keep your commercial simple - Stay on track – Don’t waste words”

These three points each share the same overarching theme. Each point aims to help the viewer follow the program and remember its contents. To accomplish this goal the writers must keep the commercial or program simple. A commercial must communicate . . . “its message simply and often explicitly” (Baldwin 15). There are two factors that can deteriorate a simple idea into one that is easily misunderstood: “insufficient information and incomprehensible symbols” (Vale 278). A good example of simplicity in advertising is found in Bernice Kanners’ book “The 100 Best TV Commercials and Why They Worked.” In a McDonald’s commercial, a picture of “an infant in her baby swing, rocking back and forth, smiling and scowling as she spies the Golden Arches and then loses sight of them” (Kanner 83). The simplicity of this commercial is effective because the viewer has enough information to determine what is making the baby smile. The viewer also understands the symbolism of the Golden Arches.

Similarly, says Jerry Vines, “Preachers should strive to be as simple as possible in their speech. A healthy goal is to work toward preaching so that the children in the congregation can understand what you are saying” (Vines and Shaddix 232).

Simplicity alone is not enough to keep the commercial or program on track. The writer also must maintain a sense of order or structure as the idea is developing. “A unified structure , imaginatively conceived, actually helps him or her follow your logic or get involved in your story and remember your message” (Book 35). Each

commercial or program must determine how its central idea will unfold. This usually takes the form of an outline. Howard and Mabley say that . . . “to begin writing without knowing where one is going is to head for the wilderness, with very little prospect of finding one’s way out again” (76). An outline keeps the writer on track. If the writer fails to stay on track, the commercial or program will lose its direction. A commercial or show must always be moving forward. In his experience of reviewing scripts, Max Adams says that bad scripts all have this common problem: “Scenes that go nowhere. A scene ought to be doing something, but I’ve read a lot of scripts in which one third of the scenes went all over the place, and the other two thirds simply didn’t move the story” (200). Without an outline, the writer will produce the feeling that the story is heading no where in particular. An outline not only helps the writer organize his thoughts but also plays to the viewer’s sense of logic and order. “By arranging the story elements in the right order, the writer is able to attract the mind of the spectator to move forward. If the story fails to contain these elements, the verdict of the spectator is that the picture was slow, long, and boring” (Vale 187). Preachers never want to be classified as long and boring; thus, they need a good outline. Robinson says that “a good outline always helps with clarity. You can use the outline to design the sermon as you would a conversation, so that each point is related to what goes before” (333). However, without a clear outline of the preacher’s thoughts, the inevitable occurs. The preacher and the audience get lost in the wilderness (Mabley).

An outline does not stand on its own. Words must be used to bring the outline to life and communicate the idea to the viewer. Every word must be used for specific

reasons. Wasted words will harm the intended message. “The average viewer is not interested in trying to figure out the point of a copy line, scene, or entire commercial. He will take his information directly or he may not take it at all” (Baldwin 16).

Words are powerful if used correctly. Kanner believes that words have the potential to be more powerful than some images: “While it’s true that a picture may be worth a thousand words, it’s equally true that a few well-crafted words can paint a very compelling pitch – and pictures. Speech, artfully designed, can make an otherwise mundane commercial dramatic, sublime and memorable” (29).

Vines says that “words do not have to be long and complicated to be effective” (233) He then cites several memorable phrases from history: ‘Four score and seven years ago;’ ‘The Lord is my Shepherd;’ ‘To be or not to be;’ ‘We have nothing to fear but fear itself’” (Vines and Shaddix 233). Effective sermons, therefore, are ones that use simple but memorable words.

“Write clearly and conversationally”

The way a commercial or television show is written will determine its final form. Will the car commercial be in the form of a man dressed in plaid screaming this month’s deal? Or will the viewer see more calming pictures of a sedan driving down serene country roads? Choosing a style with which to present a commercial or television program can determine its effectiveness. People do not necessarily dislike some commercials, but “they do not like to be yelled at or treated rudely. They want to be respected” (Book 18). Dr. Gary Steiner, author of “The People Look at Television,” studied what people liked and disliked in commercials. One of his

respondents said “I dislike the tendency they have to regard me as an idiot. That’s what I dislike most” (Baldwin 63).

There are two styles of commercials common on television: the soft sell commercial and the hard sell commercial. Soft sell advertising “refers to more entertaining advertising, which charms instead of coerces” (Baldwin 63). Hard sell advertising is “usually equated with a high degree of irritation but equally high persuasion” (Baldwin 63). Why would anyone continue to use hard sell when viewers show such disdain toward this style? Research surprisingly revealed that “apparently, annoying TV commercials don’t hurt sales and indeed may stimulate them” (Baldwin 63). The problem with hard-sell advertising is that, while it may increase short term sales, the long term attitude toward the product may be harmed. At a western regional conference of American Association of Advertising Agencies in 1978, advertisers were implored by Whitt Hobbs to quit using the hard sell style of advertising. He said “I am not advocating advertising that doesn’t sell . . . but selling the customer isn’t all there is to it. I also want the customer to feel good about the product and about the advertiser” (Baldwin 64).

Preachers share the same goal. We must proclaim the message of God in a way that portrays His love and grace accurately. Nobody likes to be yelled at. Robinson says “unfortunately some preachers know no other way to underline their points, and their sermons sound like shouting sessions. They confuse volume with spiritual power, thinking God only speaks in a whirlwind” (205).

“Repeat yourself”

To make a product memorable the commercial must repeat the selling idea. Book, Cary, and Tannenbaum say that “purposeful repetition can help register a selling idea. Do not expect the viewer to remember something if you say or show it only once in a 30-second spot” (110). How many times does an idea need to be seen or repeated for the viewer to remember the product? A 2000 article in “Journal of Advertising Research” by Colin MacDonald set out to answer this question. He determined that the optimal number of times a person must be exposed to an ad was three. “The first time someone sees an ad, his or her reaction is ‘what is it?’ On the second exposure, he or she asks ‘what of it?’ or ‘so what?’ It is only on the third occasion that the person will start to process the information and decide if the message is relevant and interesting or not” (MacDonald as quoted in Katz 108). The idea is the same for television shows and movies. In order for the viewer to remember the theme of the show it must be repeated. “An old stagecraft axiom states: Tell every important factor three times to the audience if you want to be sure they understand it” (Vale 38). However, the screenwriting industry prefers the word “duplication” to “repetition.” They say the word duplication has “different means of expression, and because each of them can express the same thing in a different way” (Vale 38-39). In other words, screenwriters say the same thing but use different words and phrases. It is extremely important to employ duplication. If not, the viewer may forget something important that happened earlier in the program. Vale explains, “The fatigue of concentrated attention during the whole run of a picture is very considerable. Sometimes our ears do not pick up certain parts of the dialog,

sometimes our eyes get tired, and sometimes we have difficulties in following and understanding the plot. In all these cases, we shall be grateful if certain facts are brought back to our attention by duplication” (39).

When preachers use the same idea it is called, according to Don Sunukjian, “restatement.” He says “whenever you come to a key sentence of either content or structure – restate that sentence (i.e. immediately say the same things in different words)” (Sunukjian 76). Emory Griffin employs the same concept when he explained that during a sermon he “tells them what I’m going to say. I say it. Then I tell them what I’ve said” (Vines and Shaddix 220). Regardless of how it is accomplished, preachers must learn that listeners do not always grasp what is said immediately and, thus, need to hear it again. And probably, again.

“Be Honest”

Honesty in television advertising appears to be an oxymoron. However, when a viewer senses that the story line or product abilities are unbelievable, he will quickly tune out. “A good commercial is honest. It should express the creative strategy in a highly believable manner. If your commercial is insincere or untrue, your customer may spot it in an instant” (Book, Cary, Tannenbaum 18). Screenwriters call the concept of being honest “probability.” The goal in writing a television script is that it not only relates to the viewer’s life but also is believable. A viewer’s belief in a program will vary in degree. The more probable the viewer sees the story the more likely he will watch it to the end. “The more he believes in the

story, the more seriously he will take it and the more raptly engrossed he will be. If the story is improbable, he will be reluctant to go along” (Vale 236).

The same holds true for preaching. The listener is not going to go along if he does not believe the message or the messenger. Preachers must strive hard to proclaim ideas that are real and believable. A preacher who says that we are to pray several hours a day on the basis of 1 Thessalonians 5:17 “pray without ceasing” is impractical and unbelievable. Likewise, a preacher that states the claims of holiness and purity yet does not exhibit those characteristics in his life is categorized as unbelievable. Kenton Anderson, in an article entitled “Squeaky Clean,” says “good ethical practice is foundational to preaching, and good preachers know it” (Anderson 85). Preachers have an enormous responsibility to live honestly before those to whom they preach. If they fail to do so the listener will quickly recognize the insincerity of the preacher and, therefore, tune out.

Conclusion

Preachers have a lot to learn from commercial and television production. It is only logical that preachers learn to communicate in the same mode that congregants are accustomed to receiving information. We have something eternally more important to proclaim than the benefits of a used car from “Crazy Larry.” We also have a much greater love story to share than anything shown on “Days of Our Lives.” Preachers would be wise to adapt the changing techniques of television and commercial production in proclaiming the unchanging truths of God’s Word. A failure to incorporate these practices into the planning and development of sermons

may result in messages that will fall upon deaf ears. While the basic message must always remain the same, the mode of communication must change. Preachers are to follow the example of Jesus, Peter, Paul, and John when addressing their congregations. They are to make the message of God personal, relevant, and easily understood to those who faithfully listen on Sunday mornings. God has consistently communicated to His people in formats that were easy for them to understand. Preachers would do well to follow His example.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEACHING OUTLINE

The following is a course outline for pastors or an advanced homiletics class.

The Course is divided into three lessons.

Course Outcome: The student will compare the communication techniques of television and commercial production to sermon preparation and delivery.

Lesson 1 Outcome: The student will defend how Biblical authors used familiar communication techniques to proclaim God's Word. The student will also list the importance knowing their audience and communicate only one idea.

I. Why do we need to consider television and commercial production when preparing and preaching a sermon?

- 1) Neilson Media Research says the average American home has the television on 7 hours and 45 minutes a day
 - The same research shows the average American watches over four hours of television a day ("Facts").
 - By the age of sixty-five, the average American will have viewed over two million television commercials (Clark 195).
 - Research shows that 50% of U.S. homes have three or more television sets (Rideout, Vandewater, and Wartella).
 - Forty percent of Americans say they "always or often watch television while eating dinner" (Gentile and Walsh, 8).

- 2) Question: Is it Biblical to learn preaching skills from watching television?

The New Testament preachers used audience centered sermons.

A) Acts 2 "Peter at Pentecost"

- The audience was Jewish. The people who were in Jerusalem that day were celebrating the holy day of Pentecost
- Peter used terms in his sermon such as "fellow Jews," "all of you who live in Jerusalem," "give ear to my word," "Jesus of Nazareth." All of these phrases and terms typify Semitic style.
- Peter quotes the prophet Joel and Psalm 16. The audience would have been familiar with each quotation.
- Peter proclaimed a Jewish gospel to the Jewish audience.

B) Acts 17 "Paul on Mars Hill"

- The Stoic and Epicurean audience saw no authority in scripture.
- Paul begins his message by acknowledging the “unknown god” of their culture.
- There is a strong emphasis on knowing and against not knowing in that culture, thus Paul gained an ear when he said he knew the unknown god. To live in ignorance was the greatest imaginable folly in that culture.
- Paul quotes the poet Aratus of Soli.

What can we learn from television and commercial production?

II. Know your audience and your product.

- 1) You must know your product (scripture).
 - Warning about too much exposition – David Howard, “The tools of Screenwriting,” says that “overuse of exposition quickly becomes tedious for the audience.”
- 2) You must know your audience.
 - Illustration: Who generally watches Sunday football? How do commercials target this male audience. (women, beer, food)
 - Illustration: Who generally watches Oprah? How do commercials target this audience? (women’s hygiene, clothes)
 - You must know the audience to whom you are speaking.
 - Illustration: I describe the difference in Turner Memorial versus Forest Hill audiences. Forest Hill Baptist Church is a rural, low income church. The average education level completed was high school. Turner Memorial Baptist Church is a suburban church to the capital city of the state in which it resides. The vast majority of members hold a college degree and many have masters or more. The community is middle to upper class.

Question: How do you prepare sermons with your audience in mind? Haddon Robinson’s quote “sit them across from you in the study as you prepare your message.”

III. Emphasize your main selling point.

- 1) It is beneficial for commercials to have one idea.
 - Albert Book in “The radio and television commercial” says that “If a commercial tries to use too many ideas, words and pictures it will emerge

haphazard and ineffective.”

- Huntley Baldwin in, “Creating effective TV commercials,” says boil down into one short, simple sentence the primary reason you are asking the consumer to buy your brand instead of another.”

2) Activity: I will quote the following commercial ideas and have the class tell me what product is being sold.

- “For everything else there’s Master Card”
- “I’m Lov’in it” - McDonalds
- “Built Ford tough”
- To show the lasting effects of a good central idea: “Where’s the beef?”
Wendy’s

3) Question: What does a good central idea do?

- A good central idea keeps the attention of the viewer. Too many ideas cause disunity in a viewers mind.
- A good central idea is easier to remember. Albert Book cites research from Gallup that says “viewers and listeners recall is lessened when multiple ideas are crammed into a TV or radio message.”
- A good idea must graduate to a conclusion, or “goal.” A “goal” is a result in the future.

4) Sermons must fulfill what we promise. If our sermon is “3 Ways to make your marriage better” then by the end of the message you must have given discussed 3 ways to make your marriage better.

Lesson II Outcome: The student will compare why commercials/television shows and preachers need to make their sermons simple, relevant, and get the audiences' attention.

IV. Make the commercial relevant.

- 1) How do you make a commercial relevant?
 - Albert Book says a good commercial “strikes a chord with the viewers or listeners and takes on a life of its own.”
 - Illustration: “Got milk” The ad agency determined that milk always goes with something. What if that something didn’t have milk? What do people experience?
 - You have to determine what people *need*. Czerniawski and Maloney, “Creating Brand Loyalty,” say advertising executives use four tools to determine what people feel they need.
 - Talk to customers on a regular basis.
(Know the people in your audience.)
 - Use intuition based on past experience.
(What do you sense your congregation’s unspoken needs are?)
 - Employ occasional studies to allow for trend tracking.
(Are there any consistent issues that keep coming to the surface in your church?)
 - Borrow from other categories for parallels and insights.
(What is being discussed on Oprah, the morning news shows, etc. {money, sex, teens, kids})
 - Question: What is the pastoral equivalent to the above statements?
 - Example: Sermon Idea from sermon on Mark 2

“God cares about people more than rules”

- This is an excerpt from a sermon I preached and is used to show the students how I made the sermon idea relevant.

However, we tend to place rules above people. Looks like a chained parking lot going into a church with “do not enter” sign. This looks like a children’s playground behind a church with locked gate and sign that says “for church use only.” This looks like a youth Christmas party at divorced man’s house. His ex-in-laws left the church because we refused to change the location of the party. We reply to such examples by exclaiming “we would never be that way pastor.” However, have you ever heard someone say “but the constitution says, but church policy says, but we’ve never done it that way

before?” Attitudes like this reveal that we care more about rules than we care about people. (Hamm)

V. Get their attention fast and keep it.

- 1) Obstacles preachers face:
 - (the remote control) Albert Book says “remote controls allow television viewers to ‘channel surf’ during commercials or to mute the sound during commercials. It is much tougher to gain and hold the audience’s attention.”
 - “Channels magazine” study to determine why viewers change the channel so frequently – 29.4% get bored with the program their watching, 28.4% want to make sure their not missing something better
 - “A good story well told is simple but not easy” – David Howard
 - Question: How do we compete with this biological process? How do we keep their attention?
 - a) *telling stories*
 - b) Graeme Turner , “Film and Social Practices,” says that “Some societies may have no equivalent to the novel, but all societies tell stories.”
- 2) David Howard on what makes a good story
 - The story is about somebody with whom we have empathy
 - This somebody wants something very badly
 - This something is difficult, but possible to do, get, or achieve.
 - The story is told for maximum emotional impact and audience participation in the proceedings.
 - The story must come to a satisfactory ending, which does not necessarily mean a happy ending.
- 3) Warning concerning shocking stories
 - Illustration: Brian Rietvelt – state trooper – used bottle of Vodka filled with water and glass of orange juice in Sunday school class to make the point of how easily we judge others without knowing all the right information. Somebody got up and walked out of class thinking it was real Vodka. Others were so distracted they could not pay attention to the lesson.

VI. Keep the commercial simple – Stay on Track – Don’t Waste Words.

- 1) Eugene Vale “There are two factors that can deteriorate a simple idea into one that is easily misunderstood, insufficient information and incomprehensible symbols.”
- 2) Question: What type of things do we use as preachers that can be easily misunderstood?
 - Theological words we assume everyone knows – e.g. “salvific”
 - Illustration: After using this word one Sunday morning a man in the

church approached me asked if I had made that word up or was it a real word.

- Incomplete thoughts or sentences – listen to yourself preach on tape and you will find that sometimes you did not say what you thought you said – the idea was in your head but it did not come out the way you wanted.
 - Use of the original language – sometimes we show off – must make it clear why we are using the language
 - Illustration: Preaching through Colossians series I stated before explaining a Greek phrase that sometimes “English was like a black and white silent movie and the Greek was like a High Definition Bose surround sound movie.”
- 3) Illustration: less is more – McDonalds commercial where the baby is in a baby swing rocking back and forth – she is seen scowling when she rocks down and smiling when she rocks up – when the camera pans out the window we learn that she sees the golden arches on the up swing and loses sight of them on the down swing.
 - 4) Outline – to be simple you must be orderly
 - 5) Albert Book, “The radio and television commercial”, says “A unified structure, imaginatively conceived, actually helps him or her follow your logic or get involved in your story and remember your story.”
 - 6) Question: What benefits have you found or could you see in using a well outlined message?
 - Easy to follow, more memorable, easy to preach from memory (not tied to notes as much)
 - 7) An outline helps the sermon move forward – Max Adams, “The screenwriters survival guide,” says “A scene ought to be doing something, but I’ve read a lot of scripts in which one third of the scenes went all over the place, and the other two thirds simply didn’t move the story.”
 - 8) Don’t waste words – talk simply
 - 9) Huntley Baldwin, “Creating Effective TV Commercials,” says “The average viewer is not interested in trying to figure out the point of the copy line, scene, or entire commercial. He will take his information directly or he may not take it at all.”

- 10) Illustration: The greatest compliment I have received on my preaching is when a parent tells me that their 9 year old likes to hear me preach – if a child gets it, then the adults get it.

Lesson III Outcome: The student will evaluate the similarities between how commercials/television shows and sermons must be conversational, repetitive, and honest.

VII. Write conversationally (speak conversationally).

- 1) Albert Book, “The radio and television commercial,” says that “people do not like to be yelled at or treated rudely. They want to be respected.”
 - Illustration: Which type of commercials do you like the most – Crazy Larry’s Used Car Lot or the Budweiser commercial that praises the “Mr. Nose bleed ticket holder”
 - “it takes pack mule and a Sherpa to get to your seat – you can see your house from here, you can see Canada from here”
- 2) Soft sell versus Hard sell
 - Huntley Baldwin, “Creating effective TV commercials,” defines soft sell as “entertaining advertising, which charms instead of coerces.” And hard sell as “advertising which is usually equated with high degree of irritation but equally high persuasion.”
- 3) Whit Hobbs, at the 1978 American Association of Advertising Agencies, said “I’m not advocating advertising that doesn’t sell, but selling the customer isn’t all there is to it. I also want the customer to feel good about the product and the advertiser.”
 - We don’t aim to make the congregant “feel good,” but we aim to communicate in a manner the congregant is accustomed to receiving information.

VIII. Repeat Yourself.

- 1) Albert Book, “The radio and television commercial,” said “Purposeful repetition can help register a selling idea. Do not expect the viewer to remember something if you say it only once in a 30 second spot.”
- 2) Colin MacDonald – 2000, “Journal of Advertising Research”
 - determined the optimal number of times a person must be exposed to something is three.
 - a) The first time someone sees an ad, his or her reaction is “what is it?”
 - b) The second exposure, he or she asks “what of it” or “so what.”
 - c) It is on the third occasion that the person will start to process the information and decide if the message is relevant and interesting or not.

- 3) How do commercials and TV shows do this?
 - “it slices it dices,” “it whitens it brightens”
 - TV shows will tell what happened the week before during the introduction
 - Movies will remind the viewer what has taken place in subtle ways such as a character conversing with another character about events that happened earlier in movie.
- 4) Eugene Vale, “The technique of screen and television writing,” says “The fatigue of concentrated attention during the whole run of a picture is very considerable. Sometimes our ears do not pick up certain parts of the dialog, sometimes our eyes get tired, and sometimes we have difficulties in following and understanding the plot. In all these cases we shall be grateful if certain facts are brought back to our attention by duplication.”
- 5) Question: What significance does this information play in how we deliver sermons?
 - we must say our main ideas several times throughout the sermon
 - e.g. “God cares more about your spiritual needs than your physical wants”
 - we must restate what we are saying – that is, saying the same thing in different words
 - Illustration: What is a different way of saying “Give your life to Christ”?
 - Surrender to Jesus, get saved, come to Jesus, accept Jesus as your savior, etc...

IX. Be Honest.

- 1) Albert Book, “The radio and television commercial,” says “If your commercial is insincere or untrue, your customer may spot it in an instant.”
- 2) Eugene Vale, “The technique of screen and television writing”, says “The more he believes in the story the more seriously he will take it and the more aptly engrossed he will be. If the story is improbable, he will be reluctant to go along.”
- 3) Preachers must proclaim ideas that are believable.
- 4) 1 Thessalonians 5:17 “Pray without ceasing”
 - A sermon that says we are to pray 3-4 hours a day is unbelievable.
- 5) Question: What’s a more believable way to proclaim this truth?
 - Preachers must live lives that are credible.

- You lose credibility if you preach on temper and lose it during a heated business meeting.
- You lose credibility if you preach on sexual purity and it is found out that you have had an affair.
- Most importantly, you lose credibility with your family if you are different at church than at home (preacher mode), if they see you jumping to spend time with church members but never spend quality time with them – if they see you watching things on TV, listening to music, or going to movies that are inconsistent with God's holiness. Our most important ministry is always to our family and they know whether or not we are being honest"

Student Handout:

Why should preachers study television and commercial production?

- Research shows the average American watches over _____ of television a day (Facts)
- By the age of sixty-five, the average American will have viewed over _____ television commercials (Clark 195).
- Research shows that _____ of U.S. homes have _____ television sets (Rideout, Vandewater, and Wartella).
- _____ of Americans say they "always or often watch television while eating dinner" (Gentile and Walsh 8).

New Testament preachers used audience centered sermons.

Acts 2

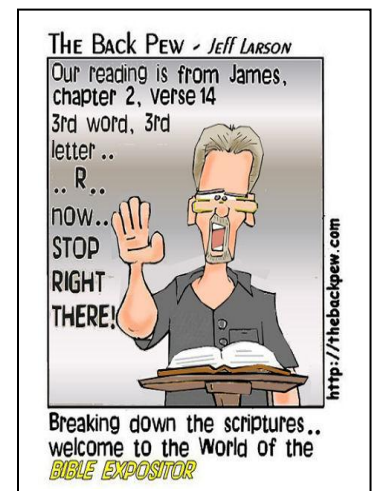
Acts 17

What can we learn from television and commercial production?

1. "Know your _____ and your _____"

- Know your Scripture:

"Overuse of exposition quickly becomes tedious for the audience"
David Howard, "The tools of Screenwriting"



- Know your audience

List some characteristics of your congregation:

“Sit some of the members from your church across from you in the study as you prepare your message.”
Haddon Robinson

2. “Emphasize your _____.”

“If a commercial tries to use too many ideas, words and pictures it will emerge haphazard and ineffective.”

Albert Book “The radio and television commercial”

“Boil down into one short, simple sentence the primary reason you are asking the consumer to buy your brand instead of another.”
Huntley Baldwin, “Creating effective TV commercials”

“Viewers and listeners recall is lessened when multiple ideas are crammed into a TV or radio message.”

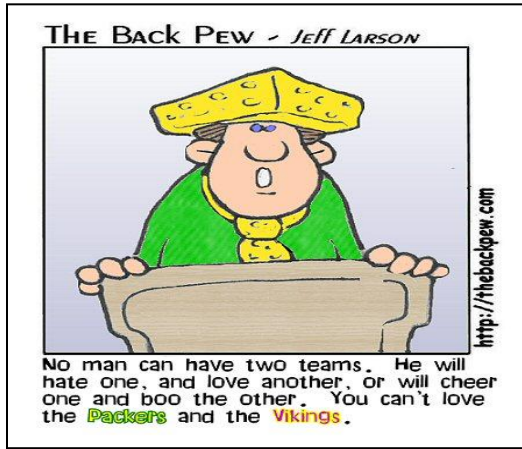
Albert Book, “The Radio and Television Commercial”

- **“Goal” –**

- **“Intention” –**

Sermons must fulfill at the _____ what we have
promised in the _____.

3. “Make the commercial_____”



“A good commercial strikes a chord with the viewers or listeners and takes on a life of its own.”

Albert Book, “The radio and television commercial”

Developing Relevancy:

(Write next to each phrase how to adapt this concept to sermon preparation)

- talk to customers on a regular basis
- use intuition based on past experience
- employ occasional studies to allow for trend tracking
- borrow from other categories for parallels and insights

4. “Get their attention_____ and _____”

“Channels” magazine study to determine why viewers change the channel so frequently

- _____ get bored with the program their watching
- _____ want to make sure their not missing something better

What is done to keep an audience’s attention?

“A good story well told is simple but not easy” – David Howard, “The tools of screenwriting”

“Some societies may have no equivalent to the novel, but all societies tell stories.” - Graeme Turner, “Film and Social Practices”

What makes a good story?

- The story is about somebody with whom we have empathy
- This somebody wants something very badly
- This something is difficult, but possible to do, get, or achieve.
- The story is told for maximum emotional impact and audience participation in the proceedings.
- The story must come to a satisfactory ending, which does not necessarily mean a happy ending.

5. “Keep the commercial _____ – stay _____ –
don’t _____”

“There are two factors that can deteriorate a simple idea into one that is easily misunderstood - insufficient information and incomprehensible symbols.” Eugene Vale, “The technique of screen and television writing”

- An outline helps the sermon move _____, be _____, and _____.

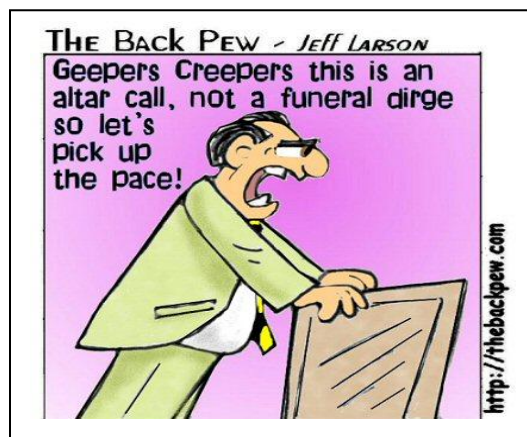
“A unified structure, imaginatively conceived, actually helps him or her follow your logic or get involved in your story and remember your story.” Albert Book, “The radio and television commercial”

“The average viewer is not interested in trying to figure out the point of the copy line, scene, or entire commercial. He will take his information directly or he may not take it at all.” Huntley Baldwin, “Creating Effective TV Commercials”

- Preach so that a _____ can understand you.

6. “Write (Preach) _____”

- “Soft sell”
- “Hard sell”



“People do not like to be yelled at or treated rudely. They want to be respected.” Albert Book, “The radio and television commercial”

7. “_____ Yourself”

“Purposeful repetition can help register a selling idea. Do not expect the viewer to remember something if you say it only once in a 30 second spot.”

Albert Book, “The radio and television commercial”

Colin MacDonald, in a 2000, “Journal of Advertising Research” article, determined the optimal number of times a person must be exposed to something is three.

- The first time someone sees an ad, his or her reaction is “_____”
- The second exposure, he or she asks “_____.”
- It is on the third occasion that the person will start to process the information and decide if the message is relevant and interesting or not.

“The fatigue of concentrated attention during the whole run of a picture is very considerable. Sometimes our ears do not pick up certain parts of the dialog, sometimes our eyes get tired, and sometimes we have difficulties in following and understanding the plot. In all these cases we shall be grateful if certain facts are brought back to our attention by duplication.” Eugene Vale, “The technique of screen and television writing”

8. “Be

“

“The more he believes in the story the more seriously he will take it and the more aptly engrossed he will be. If the story is improbable, he will be reluctant to go along.” Eugene Vale, “The technique of screen and television writing”

- Preaches must proclaim ideas that are _____.
- Preachers must live lives that are _____.



“If your commercial is insincere or untrue, your customer may spot it in an instant.”
Albert Book, “The radio and television commercial”

CHAPTER FIVE

REFLECTION

I had the privilege of teaching to a Doctor of Ministry class from United Theological Seminary. We met in Hilton Head, SC and I taught the morning session. The class was entitled “The African American Experience in Preaching and Leadership.” Being white and having ministered in predominantly white congregations I was concerned that I would be less than effective in my lecture. As I met the class and began teaching I was immediately struck by our commonalities. Our differences disappeared and our shared desire to lead and communicate to our congregations became the single focus. It was obvious that each of these preachers, no matter the color or geographic location, struggled with keeping the attention of their audiences. Each student recognized that they stood before congregations each Sunday who were accustomed to receiving information through television. With these goals in common we proceeded to learn how to better communicate to our congregations.

Difficulties

I encountered several difficulties while presenting my material. My material dealt with learning how to communicate in the same format as commercials and television shows. I had to be clear that while the form of our communication must change the message must stay the same. The class nodded their head in agreement as I proceeded to share why and how we can learn to keep the audiences attention using

the same techniques of television and commercial producers. However, I was unaware that a woman had missed the introduction to my lecture by entering the room late. She was now listening to me, not only confused, but also growing irritated. She thought I was suggesting that we soften the message so as to not offend listeners. I quickly, and politely, pointed out that she had missed the first ten minutes of the class and then quickly reviewed what she had missed. It was reassuring that others in class chimed in to explain she had misinterpreted what I was teaching. After a few moments she was caught up and we continued.

What did I learn? I realized a mistake that teachers may often make. I had spent the last several months researching and developing this material. I had already incorporated these ideas into my preaching ministry. However, what I failed to consider was the attitude of someone who would be hearing this information for the first time. Given another chance to teach this material I will likely be more thorough and slower paced with my introductory comments. I will give the class a chance to become acclimated to the new ideas being presented.

I also learned that through my research I had taken unfamiliar terms and made them familiar in my vernacular. For example, when I began discussing “experience cues” (an advertising term used in the development of commercials) the class looked at me dumbfounded and commented they were unfamiliar with this idea. Once again, I failed to make the connection between what I had researched and the knowledge the students brought to the class. I am more aware of the need to define terms that may be unfamiliar with the students. I would rather explain ideas, terms, or concepts too clearly than to leave a student uninformed.

Successes

I felt I communicated the information accurately and thoroughly. It seemed that the class was interested the entire lecture, which lasted more than three hours. I measured my effectiveness through the student's feedback, both immediate and belated. Through the feedback I determined that the students were able to recall specific information we discussed. They even shared how they may use the information in their own preaching ministry. I look forward to having an opportunity to teach this material again. However, if I do teach this material again I will divide the material into three classes. If I had not been teaching a doctor of ministry seminar I believe I would have lost the attention of the students.

There were eighteen students in the class. I was able to email sixteen of them five questions to determine how I may improve the information and teaching format as well as their retention of the material. I received responses from only six individuals. Their responses were helpful and encouraging.

Feedback

Questions & Responses

1. Is the thesis idea that television and commercial production effects the attention span of listeners an accurate observation? Please explain your answer.

“It is a great observation that seems to fit today’s society. This generation is the most media influenced than any other in history. You are on target drawing connections between media and church members.” (G. W. C. Lyons)

“I think your thesis is right on. I’ve observed my children and their levels of retention. It is clear that the most effective teaching medium for them is television. Three to five minutes of information, then a break allows them to process what they’ve heard and prepare for the next dose. I think to apply this information to preaching is quite insightful.” (Christopher Davis)

“Yes, in my opinion your thesis is correct in saying that television and commercial productions have affected the attentions spans of today’s congregants. In my own personal experiences in pastoral and preaching ministries, people just don’t have the attention span to listen ore even to sit still.” (Michael Thomas Scott)

“I believe it does affect the attention span of listeners because so many people have been conditioned to obtain information via the television as opposed to other media sources.” (Rev. Willis)

“In my opinion it is an accurate observation. Based on surveys (informal and formal) it seems that television and commercial production has had an effect on the attention span of listeners and the effect has crossed over into other areas of life.” (anonymous)

“I think that television and commercial production does have some effect on how people listen to communication. TV does take up a decent part of the day for many, I think, but to what extent that impacts how people listen remains to be seen.” (Pastor Thompson)

2. Did the ideas presented begin to address this problem? Please explain your answer.

“As a preacher, this presentation helped me become more aware of the media influences/techniques upon those to whom I preach.” (G.W. C. Lyons)

“The information was very helpful. The information helped to articulate and clarify some previously held assumptions.” (Christopher Davis)

“Yes, the ideas presented provided a great exploration into the problem. The sources were great and valuable tools that will be needed to help preachers and teachers in the 21st century to reach parishioners in a way that they can relate to.” (Michael Thomas Scott)

“I believe so. I particular like the point that was made about ensuring that you have movements within your sermon every 3-5 minutes.” (Rev. Willis)

“In some instances the ideas presented were excellent tools that can be incorporated in the ministry time; however, the preacher has to be prayerful in how these tools should be used in the preaching moment.”
(anonymous)

“I believe that in believing that TV and commercials are reaching consumers using a particular methodology, it is wise to adopt the methodology without compromising the message. You made that very clear and that was important.” (Pastor Thompson)

3. Without looking at your notes, what are some of the concepts from my lecture that we can include in our sermon preparation and delivery to help the listener retain more of the messages?

“repeat, repeat, repeat” (G. W. Lyons)

“Know your product, know your audience. Knowing your audience helps to determine best approach – “soft sell” or “hard sell.” (Christopher Davis)

“Changing the course of the sermon every so often into the message. Make “moves” or “shifts” which are the equivalent of commercials during the message to break the monotony.” (Michael Thomas Scott)

“To be sure to make the message relevant and the use of examples that are familiar with a broad audience.” (Rev. Willis)

“A couple of concepts come to mind: being organized in presentation, being specific about the ideas trying to convey, utilizing other senses (through storytelling, etc.)” (anonymous)

“Have (1) main thought that you want to convey to the people. Also, be aware of the context that you are ministering in. This is important and you put the proper weight on this truth. Telling stories from your life can be a powerful means of sharing truth.” (Pastor Thompson)

4. If I were to teach this material again, what would you like me to spend more time discussing and/or add to our discussion that I may have left out?

“Look at the cultural/ethnic aspects of American preaching-media relations.” (G. W. C. Lyons)

“I thought the length of the presentation, as well as the information presented, were appropriate.” (Christopher Davis)

“The practical application of the concepts and theories shared (i.e. what an entire sermon would look like and sound like utilizing this model of preaching). I also would recommend the following book to add to your bibliography, you may already have read it: **Marketplace Preaching: How to Return the Sermon to Where It Belongs** by Calvin Miller, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books(1995).” (Michael Thomas Scott)

“Perhaps the change within generations as it relates to attention spans.” (Rev. Willis)

“I cannot think of anything at this time.” (Anonymous)

“Perhaps you can spend more time dealing with bridging the gap between the ancient text and the contemporary audience. You may have dealt with this. You did make it clear that Jesus used what was familiar to the hearers so in that way, one can get the idea that we must not use ancient ideas to express contemporary truths.” (Thompson)

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Jonathan Phillip Hamm resides in Garner, NC, with his wife Christy. They were married on November 23, 1996 and have three children: Abby, Jonathan, and Ethan. Phillip was born in Colonial Heights, VA on April 16, 1975. He graduated Richard Bland College in Petersburg, VA, in 1995 with an Associates degree in Science. In 1997 he graduated from Southeastern College at Wake Forest in Wake Forest, NC, with a Bachelors of Arts degree in Biblical Studies. He graduated in 2000 from Southeastern Theological Seminary with a Masters of Divinity. In 2002 he entered into the Doctor of Ministry program and is expected to be awarded the Doctor of Ministry degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 2007. He is currently the senior pastor at Turner Memorial Baptist Church in Garner, NC.